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A
S E R M O N,
PREACHED IN THE
CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF BANGOR,
ON SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 1791,
AT
A GENERAL ORDINATION,
HELD BY
J O H N
LORD BISHOP OF BANGOR.

By PETER WILLIAMS, A.M.
HEAD-MASTER OF BANGOR-SCHOOL.

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF HIS LORDSHIP.

O X F O R D:

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AND P. BROSTER, CHESTER.

M. DCC. XCI.

S E R M O N

PREACHED IN THE

METHODIST CHURCH OF BANGOR,

ON SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 25, 1870

AT

GENERAL ORDINATION

BY

THE METHODIST CHURCH OF BANGOR,

AND

THE METHODIST CHURCH OF BANGOR,

TO
THE RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD

J O H N
LORD BISHOP OF BANGOR.

MY LORD,

WITH regard to the success or credit of the following Discourse, I have but this single wish; namely, That it may contribute to excite amongst us a spirit of liberal industry, and check that of fanaticism and error. As I know of no character who has more disinterestedly exerted himself towards obtaining that good end, or who has the welfare and improvement of this country more at heart, than your Lordship, I could not address it to any one with greater propriety. The zeal which your Lordship hath shewn in procuring a New Edition in Folio of the Welsh Bible for the use of our Churches, in adopting all pru-

dent and liberal measures for the improvement of the rising generation, and in your general conduct in promoting the interests and well-being of your Diocese, deserves the applause of all, and ought to be remembered with perpetual gratitude by the inhabitants of this country.

I am very happy in having the opportunity of publicly declaring these as the genuine sentiments of a Mind, that can feel the emotions of gratitude, but is above the mean arts both of flattery and detraction.

I am, my Lord, with great respect,

Your Lordship's most dutiful,

And obliged humble Servant,

P. WILLIAMS.

I TIM. IV. 13.

— *Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.*

THE inspired Apostles of our Saviour Christ having established Christian Societies in different places, and foreseeing that the time of their leaving this world was at hand, thought it necessary to ordain others to succeed them in the high Office to which they had been called. Accordingly we find them appointing certain persons to preside over the Churches they had founded, and to inculcate the Principles of that Religion, which they themselves had been so industrious in propagating, and for the sake of which they endured such great and undeserved afflictions. But for the proper discharge of this Ministry several qualifications were requisite ; an accurate knowledge of the doctrines of their Faith, with abilities to explain and enforce them.

To set this important matter in its true light, (as upon it, under the Providence of God, depended the safety and success of Christ's Religion) seems to have been the professed aim of St. Paul in what he hath written to his beloved Timothy and Titus, and through them to all future Ministers of the Gospel. He is extremely anxious that they should understand the right meaning and design of the Doctrine which he had delivered to them,—that they should be faithful and active in the propagation of it,—and should take care to ordain only fit men for spreading wider its beneficial influence.

When

When we compare the weight and dignity of this Office with our own unworthiness, we cannot but applaud the Apostle's wisdom and benevolence in this particular, and at the same time feel the full force of his question, *Who is sufficient for these things?*^a Yet, when we call to mind the peculiar advantages which accompany it, that it hath a natural tendency to ennoble and purify the hearts of those who faithfully discharge it, and is designed for promoting both the present and future happiness of all men; *seeing, I say, we have such a Ministry*, it becomes us *not to faint*,^b but rather to exert every faculty we have to perform aright its several functions, and make it answer, to the utmost of our power, the divine purposes of its institution.

How to obtain this great point St. Paul's admonitions will direct us. Among many other important lessons of advice, which deserve our frequent and serious consideration, that contained in the words of the Text is perhaps one of the most comprehensive; because it points out in a few words the best means of acquiring those qualifications which characterize the true Teacher of Christianity, and which alone can enable him to discharge properly the duty he owes to his Maker and his fellow-creatures — *Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine*. It will be worth our while then to consider their full import, especially as they are peculiarly applicable to the present occasion, and will furnish a variety of observations calculated to direct us in every part of our Office.

I. In the first place St. Paul exhorteth us to *give attendance*, or apply, *to reading*.

I am aware that Commentators in explaining the sense of this passage have in general confined it to the study and expounding of

^a 2 Cor. ii. 16.

^b 2 Cor. iv. 1.

the Holy Scriptures. This perhaps was the principal thing which the Apostle had in view. But when we consider the many acquired talents he himself was master of, and the admirable use he made of them in the course of his Ministry, we may presume, even upon his own example, to go a step farther, and extend it to an application to every species of useful Literature. He often exclaims, indeed, against the misapplied and comparatively vain Philosophy of the Greeks, and exposes the chimerical ideas of certain Heretics of his time; but in the very passages where he condemns the vague reveries of the one, and the *oppositions of science falsely so called*^c of some of the others, we find a tacit recommendation of real and sound Learning.

It is true, indeed, that at the first promulgation of Christianity, men of no acquired abilities were chosen to promote the great work of Salvation; every thing which was wanting on their part being supplied by the especial assistances of God's Holy Spirit: and for this proceeding, 'wise and incontrovertible reasons have been assigned. In a short time, however, when it had gained some stability in the world, it seemed good to the *Author and Finisher of our Faith*^d to draw back his almighty arm which was so visibly stretched out, and to leave his Religion in such a state, that mankind should come at the Truth, only in proportion to their honest and sincere inquiries after it.^e

^c 1 Tim. vi. 20.

^d Heb. xii. 2.

^e In feligendis illis instrumentis, quæ adhibuit Deus ad fidem disseminandam, initio homines evocavit plane indoctos, et illiteratos, præterquam quod Spiritus Sancti afflatu instructi fuissent, quo evidentius Virtutem suam-immediatam et divinam declararet, omnemque humanam sapientiam deprimeret. Quamprimum autem consilium suum in hac parte perimpletum esset, mox in proxima successione temporum, Divinam Veritatem suam alijs doctrinis, veluti pedissequis, comitatam in mundum immisit. Itaque D. Pauli calamus (qui inter Apostolos solus literatus fuit) in Scripturis N. Testamenti præcipue a Deo adhibitus est. See Bacon. de Augment. Scientiarum, p. 61. 12mo.

It is therefore no weak argument in favour of what I would enforce, that we are not only led thereby to cultivate the nobler part of our Nature, but also find it altogether necessary, in the present state of things, to enable us *to give an answer*, in a SATISFACTORY way, *to every man that asketh a reason of the hope that is in us.*^f For, in order to get a competent understanding of the Holy Scriptures, there is certainly much need of preparatory reading and information. The knowledge of Religion, like every other useful knowledge, is only to be acquired by well-directed industry. Natural Religion was but little known or practised but by those few, whose Minds had been very much strengthened and enlarged by the assistances they had derived from Science and sound Philosophy. The Religion of the Jews, which, except such parts as were *ceremonial*, or *typical*, or *allegorical*, was only a purer copy or a further illustration of that of Nature, was, it is allowed, never so well understood, nor its precepts so regularly and universally complied with, as when wholesome studies engaged the constant attention of its Ministers : from the time, I mean, that Samuel presided over the Schools of the Prophets which he had established at Naioth, to the expiration of Ezra's Priesthood.^g Again, the Religion of Christ, *that Perfect Wisdom which came down from Heaven*, and which includes all the Principles of the other two, though it stoops to the lowest capacity, being preached and adapted to the uncultivated minds of the Poor, and founded, not on matters of speculation, but on matters of fact, affordeth, nevertheless, what will exercise and enlarge the brightest understanding, and requir-eth a great deal of sober study and general information to comprehend its whole connected scheme and evidence.

^f 1 Pet. iii. 15.

^g See Bishop Lowth's *Prælect. de Hebr. Poet.* xviii. p. 170. As to the Priests and Levites among the Jews, "they were Ministers of Religion only with regard to the Ceremonial Law. To instruct men in the Truths and inculcate the Doctrines of it was an office which did not belong to them, but to the Prophets and Wise Men ; and such our Blessed Saviour promises to send the Jews after his Ascension, Matth. xxiii. 34." See also Dr. Lightfoot, Vol. ii. p. 85. &c.

Independently too of its nature simply considered, certain external circumstances arise and gather strength, in proportion to the distance of the time and place of its first establishment. These demand our attention, and cannot well be understood without a previous knowledge of many other things. For instance, without a competent knowledge of the rites, customs, and polity of the Jewish People in particular, and of those nations with whom they were more immediately connected, it is impossible to see the full force and admirable propriety of our Saviour's Parables, and his many figurative expressions and allusions. And indeed from the want of such knowledge and of a general acquaintance with ancient History and ancient manners have arisen many heretical opinions and false constructions of Holy Scripture.

Here then opens a wide field for study. The Languages, in which Revelation was originally conveyed to us, should be acquired. Histories are to be examined, facts investigated, opinions to be canvassed, nay, the precise meaning of a single word frequently to be settled. These are difficulties which successive ages have increased, and which, however they may have been diminished during this and the preceding century, are not yet by any means entirely removed. True it is, indeed, that the learned labours of some excellent Divines in our Church have furnished us with productions of the first rate, and various in their kind: but these, instead of rendering us indolent, should, at the same time that they excite our gratitude, rouse us to emulation, and encourage us to improve with equal assiduity *the talent which hath been committed to our trust.*

But why should I entirely pass over as an incentive to diligence and attention to duty, the regard we ought to have for the credit, the welfare, and interest of our country? It has been the fashion to hold this remote corner of the world in a supercilious point of view. Britons have never been wanting in manly spirit and in-

tegrity of principle. Let us not then degenerate from our Ancestors, but rather cultivate that principle, and improve that spirit in the study of whatever can invigorate or adorn it. What! though we are behind our more polished neighbours in the arts of luxury and refinement, why should we remain behind them in the cultivation of our understandings, and of the decent and valuable arts of life?

There is one thing more, which perhaps as individuals will strike us no less forcibly, and therefore should not be omitted. Our character and our influence are concerned in this matter. Men are not naturally inclined to pay much respect or attention to those they think no wiser than themselves; and even the very multitude will often disregard the best admonitions, when they think there is but little or no Learning to give those admonitions their due weight. Thus Example and Advice are made to lose much of the authority naturally belonging to them. Accordingly, to the ignorance, no less than to the immorality of the public Teachers of Religion, have been justly attributed that contempt which they laboured under, and that impiety which baffled all their exertions, when thick darkness hung over the Christian Church.

Yet high authority is often more forcible than general arguments. I will therefore just observe, that Christians of all ages and of all countries, except a few ignorant fanatics with some ill-designing men, have constantly concurred in the recommendation of sound Literature. And the Church, as early as the time of that crafty Apostate Julian, considered his decree, which, in effect, forbade all Christians to be taught the rudiments of Grammar, as a more destructive engine against the Christian Faith, (and so it certainly was) than all the sanguinary persecutions of his blood-thirsty predecessors^h. It is also worth while to take notice, that, soon after

^h See Epist. ad Jamblich. and Johnson's account of Julian. See also Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. of that period. Not unlike to this jealous conduct of Julian, both as to the motive and the
the

the Revival of Letters had opened the way for the Reformation, when we see the Religion of Christ emerging out of a state of ignorance and barbarism, and approaching somewhat nearer to its original purity, that wise and salutary Law, which excludes unlearned persons from the Gospel-Ministry, acquired the force and influence it still retains in the greatest part of the Christian World.¹ May it never be relaxed or diminished !

I need not point out to you minutely the uses of the different branches of Human Learning, or observe in what respects they severally contribute to the illustration and confirmation of Sacred Scripture. Without entering into these particulars, the reason to induce us to *give attendance to reading* is, I should hope, sufficiently strong. I might add, however, that we shall thus prepare ourselves for filling higher stations in life with proper dignity,—that we shall best understand the true end and happiness of man,—that, should it be our lot to mix much with the world, we shall check hereby any latent propensity to idleness and idle diversions, and keep aloof from the vicious and foolish fashions of mankind,—that in the greatest solitude we shall avoid the danger of becoming slaves to our own appetites, because we shall have always in our power the means of pleasure and mental conversation, — and, above all, that whatever rational, and moral, and religious improvement we shall here make, we are to consider it only as a foundation for further acquisitions ; for *Righteousness is immortal,*^k and *to him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundance ; but from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath.*^l

intention of it, was that of the Barons of England, who made a petition to Richard the II^d. “ That no Villain should send his Son to School, or be suffered to give him any kind of instruction.” See Barrington’s Ancient Stat. p. 271.

¹ See Mosheim’s Eccles. Hist. vol. iii. p. 411.

^k Wisdom of Solomon, i. 15.

^l St. Matth. xxv. 29.

If then, upon the whole, we have good reason to believe it to be the settled purpose of God's Providence, that Learning and Philosophy properly so called, shall ever contribute to the understanding and advancement of True Religion; and that the alliance, which by Nature seems to subsist between the Human Mind and whatever things are *True*, and *Fair*, and *Good*, shall always be disordered by Ignorance, it becomes the duty of every liberal-minded man to give attendance (according to his leisure and abilities) to reading, to the improvement, that is, of his Intellectual Faculties; if then of every such man, how much more of *him*, who is purposely appointed to check the progress of *wickedness and vice*, and to maintain the cause of *True Religion and Virtue*!

But whilst we furnish ourselves with a stock of Sound Learning, let us not forget to apply it to its proper end, the promoting of Christian Faith and Christian Charity. And this is the next thing which the Apostle requireth of us—*give attendance to exhortation*.

II. Although the Gospel was not established in the world *by excellency of speech*,^m not by the force of eloquence and *fleshly wisdom*;ⁿ yet St. Paul admonisheth us, that our speech should be such as *cannot be condemned*,^o—*should be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that we may know how we ought to answer every man*.^p—The important Truths of Christianity being designed to correct and enlarge the depraved minds of the whole race of mankind, it is the great end of our Ministry to bring men so far acquainted with these and with the proofs whereon they stand, as to enable them to build their Faith upon a rational foundation, and to act from a sure confidence in the Veracity, and Power, and Wisdom, and Goodness of their Maker. But to do this effectually, something more is required of the Teacher of Religion than the bare knowledge of it. To knowledge we must add the ability of explaining, enforcing, and

^m 1 Cor. ii. 1. ⁿ 2 Cor. i. 12. ^o Titus ii. 8. ^p Col. iv. 6.

convincing ; and that by arguments well directed to the reason and judgment of those who hear us. Exhortations otherwise applied may indeed raise violent emotions in weak minds, but it is well known their effects cannot be lasting, and are by no means *good to the use of edifying.*^r We must endeavour therefore to acquire a method of expressing our thoughts with correctness and propriety : we must choose the arguments most adapted to our subject, and arrange these in a manner the most likely to produce the best effect ; so that they shall carry along with them both light and conviction.

And here again recurs with great force the necessity of application, in order to obtain those qualifications, which alone can enable us to succeed in this part of our duty. At present it would be presumptuous to look up for any special assistances from above. The obstacles which rendered them necessary have long ago ceased. A proper exertion of our natural faculties, aided by the insensible and ordinary influence of Divine Grace, is alone sufficient for the right comprehending of our Holy Faith. It is also sufficient to qualify us for inculcating it to others. Now the only sure way to do this, is, to improve these faculties with all possible industry, and exert them in studying the Principles of the Philosophical Sciences fixed on a solid foundation. And here I do not allude so much to the Modern Productions that profess to teach these things, as to the *Acroatic Writings* of the Heathen Philosopher ;^s which, when properly digested and applied, are to be looked upon as a clew leading to every thing valuable in Human Literature. Hence we shall get acquainted with the true Principles of all Science, and imbibe habits of attention, and of clear and correct reasoning. This if we do, and at the same time fix upon some good plain model to direct us in our religious studies and compositions, it will perhaps be no hard matter for us to forbear making refinements of

^r Ephes. iv. 29.^s The Organon of Aristotle.

our own on abstruse points, and avoid all rhetorical and foolish ornaments; keeping thus at an equal distance the splendid fort of eloquence which seems to be gathering ground in this island, and that scholastic, metaphysical jargon which prevailed during the dark Ages.

Having then acquired those necessary qualifications that tend to instruct and persuade, let us apply them properly to the ends for which they are designed. Let our explanations be simple, though full; our reproofs mild, though determined; our exhortations pressing and sincere. Here also, as in all other respects, let us look up for instruction to the example of the first Apostles; or rather let us look up still higher, even to HIM *that spake as never man spake.*¹ Though we shall never be able to acquire any thing of his divine power of persuasion, yet we may succeed, in some degree at least, in applying our admonitions seasonably, (as He did his) in forbearing to be over-fond of general topics, and in adapting ourselves to the capacities, and to the prevailing characters and circumstances of our hearers; it being on all hands allowed, that considerations put home to men's "*own businesses and bosoms*" prove always most effectual. Yet, at the same time, we should take care to avoid most scrupulously the least shadow of personal invective and angry disputation, because we should know and remember that *the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.*²

And as we thus endeavour to imitate the simplicity of our Saviour's manner of teaching, let us also endeavour to imitate the simplicity of his Life. Unless we do this, *though we speak with the tongues of angels, we shall, in truth, become as sounding brass,*

¹ St. John vii. 46.

² St. James i. 20.

or a tinkling cymbal." For it were superfluous to say that Christianity invites no one with polluted hands to administer in her Holy Offices. One bad Minister indeed she had, with the permission of her blessed Author; and that probably, among other reasons, to shew that in no line or profession should we look for general Virtue and Integrity. You know that wicked Apostle's fate. As you feel the horrors of it, avoid the example.

Even the Pagan Teachers of Wisdom were of opinion, and fact verifies the opinion, that a good *Moral Life containeth the most powerful of all arguments to persuade*;* and that indeed we can then only expect to persuade men, when they have good reason to believe we are indued with *Prudence, and Virtue, and Benevolence.*† And, accordingly, it was a received maxim among them, *That a bad Man could never make a good Orator.*‡ A most preposterous thing therefore would it be to imagine, that *he* can be a successful Preacher of Christianity, who does not cultivate the Virtues which Christianity prescribes, but lives himself as though he were not thoroughly satisfied of its truth and importance. Thus a bad life, debasing our characters, making us contemptible in the eyes of all honest and considerate men, and rendering our labours ineffectual, injureth the cause of our Holy Faith much more than all the random attacks and wicked calumnies of the adversary. These are considerations of serious consequence. May we lay them to heart!

To compleat the character of an able Teacher of Christ's Religion, we must add one more circumstance, and that a very material one. He must *take heed unto his doctrine.*

* 1 Cor. xiii. 1. † See Aristot. Rhetor. lib. i. cap. 2. ‡ See Aristot. Rhetor. lib. ii. cap. 1.

‡ See Cicero de Orat. and Quintilian.

III. There are certain points which characterize Christianity, and demand an implicit assent. Nor are these to be looked upon as merely speculative points, but as relating ultimately to practice, and necessary to our Salvation. Founded on a Revelation firmly attested to have proceeded from the Author of Nature, they have therefore as great a claim to our attention, as those Truths which we discover by the mere exertion of Human Reason. Both must be traced to the same origin, and when known both have an equal right to our assent. Of these it is our duty to get a clear scriptural knowledge. Mistakes are dangerous. Heresies and Schisms are not uncommon. Therefore, it will require great circumspection to steer our course aright, and to hold fast, as near as may be, to the pure and sound doctrines of the Gospel.

Now, as all our religious sentiments should be formed upon a comprehensive and impartial inquiry, it becomes us first of all to prepare our minds for undertaking such an inquiry, to divest them of all worldly prepossessions, and then attend soberly to the genuine instructions of our blessed Lord and his inspired Apostles; lest haply we, like those of old, should be found to be *teaching for doctrines the commandments and opinions of men.*^a

It is true, indeed, that in our religious, as well as in all other, inquiries we should pay proper deference to the Reason that is in us; yet we cannot too cautiously avoid the dangerous principle of those, who wish to acknowledge no doctrine as true or divine but what is entirely level with the comprehension of the Human Mind. Every wise and candid man, who understands the weakness as well as the dignity of his nature, and in whom is combined that lowliness and greatness of spirit which forms the character of the true Christian—of the *truly Great Man*; I say, every

^a St. Matth. xv. 9.

such person will be ever on his guard, how he indulgeth such vain notions as to think of levelling with human imperfections the incomprehensible ways and works of OMNIPOTENCE and OMNISCIENCE. He knoweth well, that, however excellent and wonderful our rational powers may be, still their extent and capacity are at present extremely limited; nay, that they are baffled by the commonest things around him. It will be indeed his constant care to honour and improve his nature, and to use the qualifications that adorn it, not with any arrogance, but with thankful submission to that Infinite Power, which made them and all things.

With regard then to the Mysterious Parts of our Religion, (and Mysterious Parts one could not but expect in a Religion come from Heaven and addressed to creatures of such confined capacities) a man of this character, being fully persuaded that all the knowledge to be gained of them must be derived from Revelation, will attend therefore principally to the expressions of the inspired Writers themselves.^b Here, however, he will carefully avoid that dangerous, though common, error of considering such expressions separately, but will compare them with the contexts and with each other, and will take an enlarged view of the scope and argument of the author. He will not attempt to refine on what is above his comprehension, or explain on principles of Human Philosophy what he would never have had any notion of, had it not been supernaturally revealed. Nevertheless, he will not reject any assistances that can be obtained from the exertions of Human Mind, but will be careful that it be exerted in a proper way, and confined within those limits which God has fixed to it.

^b Eusebius, certainly one of the wisest and most learned of the Fathers, used to attribute almost all the confusion and disturbance that then happened in the Church to the use of unscriptural terms, and to the attention paid to them. See Socrates, Hist. l. 8. p. 25, 26.

One of the greatest difficulties in subjects of this kind is to know where to stop: The same indeed holds in our researches in the natural world. Whilst men confine themselves to the observing of the common properties and qualities of things, they frequently make discoveries of great importance and utility: but when they begin to treat of essences, of occult qualities and substances, they but too often bewilder themselves, and speak unintelligibly to others. In the same manner, whilst we seek not to know *above what is written*, and are content with the majestic simplicity of the Gospel, avoiding the mere refinements and subtleties of men, and approaching the Mysterious Parts of it with due reverence and awe, we perceive, though *through a glass darkly*,^c new relations and stupendous acts of mercy, which raise our highest admiration and call for the warmest effusions of gratitude: but when we go further, and try to penetrate that darkness which surrounds the Almighty's throne, to pry into *the secret things which belong unto the Lord our God*,^d and those hidden reasons which influence Him in his Dispensations towards us, we are lost in the research, and meet with nothing but difficulties and surmises.

To a neglect of such precautions we must attribute the absurd notion of those, who would degrade our Divine Religion into a mere System of Morality, enlarged indeed, but still to be investigated and thoroughly discovered by the exertions of Human Intellect. Whence too but from this source have arisen many other Heresies in the world, all of which have been marked with cruelty, or pride, or hatred, or animosity? Hence also evidently at this time, and in this country, pernicious opinions are maintained by weak, though insidious people, and propagated with no common industry. Examples so frequent, and so fatal in their conse-

^c 1 Cor. xiii. 12. ^d Deuter. xxix. 29.

quences are, one would think, sufficient to deter us from indulging ourselves *in vain and foolish babblings*,^c and to make us hold fast, *with meekness and fear*,^f the wholesome and powerful doctrine of Jesus Christ, the *Eternal Son of God*.

Directing our inquiries on this head with proper care, and with that spirit of charity whereby Christians should be always distinguished, we cannot be too diligent in examining the tenets of our Sacred Faith, nor employ too much of our time in investigating its sublime and real nature. The being exercised in these things will minister to our comfort and our glory. They are the means of our Salvation. Every method, therefore, which can assist us in our pursuit, should be employed. Every circumstance that will further us in our progress should be availed of; "*for every idea is useful for the enforcement or decoration of Moral or Religious Truth.*"

And here I should wish to observe that the Members of the Church of England enjoy no small advantages in having a good System of Articles, which, notwithstanding the abuse of some short-sighted cavillers, are drawn up, with great moderation, on real scriptural authority, and calculated to caution and direct us in our religious studies. And as we proceed in these studies, we shall soon learn to avoid, or rather to pity, the extravagant and comfortless reveries of that Superstition, Enthusiasm, Infidelity, and that restless Spirit of Innovation, which have been in the world, which are, and which ever will be, as long as men are men. All these muddy streams, however various and different they may seem to be at first, will, upon close and *philosophical* examination, appear to originate from one or other of these sources; namely, from ignorance, a narrowness of mind, or the want of an *honest* and *sound* judgment

^c 2 Tim. ii. 16.

^f 1 Pet. iii. 15.

to *know the SCRIPTURES and the POWER of God.*^s We shall also soon learn the gracious design and spiritual nature of Christianity, to explain to others its doctrines and its precepts, to shew by what strong arguments they prescribe and inculcate *Pure, Universal VIRTUE*, and to convince our hearers on how clear and unshaken a foundation rests the Important Doctrine of *LIFE and IMMORTALITY*.

To conclude: Such seems to have been St. Paul's meaning in the words of the Text. We have seen that they contain or imply the three great requisites to enable us to discharge our Ministry with honour to ourselves and advantage to others, an application to study, to exhortation, to doctrine. Without the first, the second cannot be well effected; and without the last, both the other would be dangerous. Each separately then demands our attention, for to sustain our character we should be competent in all. Such is the task enjoined us by one who knew well the duty of a Minister of Christ's Gospel — a task arduous indeed and difficult, to be undertaken with caution, but to be carried on by a right exertion of those qualities of the mind whereby alone every thing that is "Fair and Good" is to be attained to and preserved, I mean mildness, resolution, and perseverance.

Do we want encouragements to excite our diligence? Encouragements enow there are. Were we to look only to temporal advantages, all honest and intelligent Superiors, who have the dispensation of the good things of this world, and have at heart the well-being of Society, will always notice and reward the exertions of Industry in the cultivation of Sound Learning and Christian Virtue. If they do not, let the shame fall on their own heads. We shall have done our duty. It is, however, fixed in the very nature of things, that all literary and liberal pursuits shall be attended with

^s St. Matth. xxii. 29.

the sublimest of all pleasures. And how, besides, can *he* have the common feelings of humanity, who receives not inexpressible satisfaction, when he considereth that he is doing some good in the world, and is promoting in a high character the temporal and everlasting happiness of his fellow-creatures? Other encouragements and rewards there also are, which, it is affirmed upon evidence not to be refuted, we are to enjoy in another state of existence, and of the nature of which our present capacities can form no adequate idea. *They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars, for ever and ever.*^h

Behold then how wisely it hath been ordained by the Merciful Author of our Nature, that in furthering the well-being of mankind in general, we take the surest steps to advance our own true interest and happiness,—present as well as future—temporal as well as eternal!

Having then such encouragements, such pleasures, and such hopes to comfort us, let us be active in our several stations. Our faculties are fresh and in their bloom, it only remains that we apply them properly. *And let us not be weary in well doing,*ⁱ but be persuaded rather, that the greater progress we make in Virtue and Learning, the more incumbent it is on us to increase our diligence.^k “*We shall grow more happy as our minds take a wider range.*” The better also shall we be able to see through the glare and futurity of that specious sort of Learning, which is the parent of Pride, and Scepticism, and Infidelity. This is the Learning, which *increaseth sorrow.*^l This is the Wisdom, which is *earthly and sensual.*^m Avoiding it, let us exert our endeavours in the service of that real

^h Daniel xii. 3.ⁱ Gal. vi. 9.^k See Chrysost. de Sacerdotio λογ. ε'. κηφ. ε'.^l Eccles. i. 18.^m St. James iii. 15.

kind of Wisdom, whose end is the welfare of each other and an inward peace of mind in this world ; and in the next, eternal happiness. Nor let any man presume to say that they can be exerted in a better cause ; for all our acquisitions, however great, or brilliant, or extensive they may be, unaccompanied with this best sort of Wisdom are, in the eye of sober Reason, but of little worth ; for Reason suggesteth to us—and all her sober suggestions are confirmed by Revelation—that *whether there be prophecies, they shall fail ; whether there be tongues, they shall cease ; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away : but Charity, or the study and practice of that which is Good and Holy, never faileth, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*^a

Thus then if we conduct ourselves, we may humbly hope that Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid, will cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly know our several duties, and be able to discharge them to the honour and praise of his holy name ; and that finally, when we leave this world, He, of his great goodness, will give us that *Life which is hid in Him with Christ.*^o

^a 1 Cor. xiii. 8.—1 Tim. iv. 8.

^o Col. iii. 3.

T H E E N D.

